

Michael J. Fox
Commander Third District
Department of Connecticut
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Testimony before the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs Public Hearing 2/10/11

Chairman Maynard, Chairman Hennessey, distinguished member of the Committee. My name is Michael J. Fox. I served our country for four years on active duty, to include one tour in the Republic of Vietnam as Commandant 135th Engineer Detachment at Phu Hiep in II Corp, and another 15 years in the CT Army National Guard with the 242nd Engineer Battalion. I appear before you today in support of legislation that I consider beneficial to Connecticut's veterans.

Proposed S.B 374, AN ACT CONCERNING THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS.

I support this bill because the Department of Veterans' Affairs led by Commissioner Linda Schwartz has made many advances in the care of our veterans. The Board of Trustees has been very instrumental in Commissioner Schwartz' excellent work. The Board should continue to be appointed in the nonpolitical manner as in the past, but, in my opinion should have representation from all the major veterans' organizations to include the Disabled Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, The American Legion, The Vietnam Veterans of America. These organizations represent hundreds of thousands of Connecticut veterans and are well versed in their needs.

Proposed H. B. No. 5058: AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE TUITION AND FEE WAIVERS FOR VETERANS.

I am a little confused. I was under the impression that this proposed bill would simply eliminate student activity fees for veterans working toward a degree. When I read the text, I found that the bill basically provides for waivers for summer school attendance. This is something I have been working towards for a few years now. This would help veterans attain a degree in much less time. Most of us take the minimum number of credits so that we may also take care of our families.

Having taken advantage of tuition waivers while attending Tunxis Community College I found it odd that I was required to pay a student activity fee out of pocket. Like most veterans, especially those in my age group, I did not take part in the usual student activities such as clubs or organizations, and used the "student center" only to do a little cramming. I understand that these fees stay with the school and do not become part of the general fund, so there would be no cost to the state. At Tunxis I paid about \$500 a semester in student activity fees. If I were to enroll at, say, Central, those fees would amount to over \$1200. That is something that we cannot afford.

Proposed S. B. No. 371: AN ACT CONCERNING IDENTIFICATION CARDS FOR VETERANS.

Commissioner Linda Schwartz of the Department of Veterans' Affairs has long advocated identification cards of some kind for our state's veterans and for veterans to be able to carry a card or at least having a mark identifying us as a veteran on our driver's license. So many veterans are unaware of the benefits for which they are eligible and seeing an identifying mark on a driver's license would be an incentive for anyone viewing the card to assist in receiving these benefits.